

# Thoughts from our High School Seniors

*This month we checked in with our high school seniors to see how they're coping with the unexpected end to their senior year. Here are thoughts from a few of them.*

## **Jocelyn Zonnefeld:**

While no senior wanted or expected a quarantine finish to high school, I've started to look at it as an opportunity instead of a loss. Yes, certain "rites of passage" like graduation and prom might be at a different time or not happen at all, but all hope of an enjoyable senior year is not lost. In fall, Lord willing, the seniors here at Covenant will be leaving our families to pursue the next phase in our lives, so I'm seeing this as the opportunity to spend even more time with my family during my last

academic year at home. Quarantine has put things like prom and senior freedom into perspective, and though I might not be this positive all the time (my family can attest to that), this global pandemic has helped me straighten my priorities before I move an entire block away to go to college.

## **Michael Vander Plaats:**

If you would have told me in March that in a few weeks the Coronavirus would cause schools to close, and even an early end to the school year, I probably would have laughed. But that's the current reality we are living in. The biggest (for lack of a better word) struggle for students, at least the ones I've spoken

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## Prayer Gathering

We will gather together (via Zoom) for prayer on Thursday, **May 7**, at 7:30 PM. We will pray for our congregation, our nation, and the world God loves. Please ponder how our Lord would have us pray.

Here is a stanza from a hymn written by Calvin Seerveld, "A Congregational Lament." It echoes the boldness of many Psalms, and it's printed as #576 in our grey Psalter Hymnals.

"Why, Lord, must any child of yours be hurt?  
Does all our pain and sorrow somehow please  
you?

You are a God so jealous for our praises—  
hear this lament as a prayer that fills the  
earth.

We plead: Repair the brokenness we share.  
Chastise no more lest it destroy your crea-  
tures.

Hear this lament as intercessory prayer,  
and speak your powerful word to make us  
hopeful."

-Pastor Joel

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Courier

May 2020

**COVENANT**  
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

# A Note from the Elders

Dear Covenant brothers and sisters, this morning (Sunday 19 April), in his sermon the first Sunday after the resurrection, Pastor Joel talked about how the risen Jesus helps us to believe in him by coming to us a community of believers, just as he came to his gathered disciples after his resurrection on the first day of the new week. He came to greet those first disciples with his peace, to send them out to proclaim the good news, and to breathe on them the empowering Holy Spirit. We of the Covenant CRC family, part of the church today, as a body of believers shaped by the Holy Spirit and testifying to his resurrection and its consequences for the world, are sent out into the world to proclaim this same good news.

A few days ago, I encountered Psalm 87, in which, in just seven short verses, the psalmists declare the Lord's love of Zion, the city of God, and how it is said of that city that many from all the nations of the world will be considered as its citizens. Many of the ancient nations mentioned in that psalm are now countries where the religion of Islam is dominant. Centuries ago, apostles first brought the gospel to our pagan northern European ancestors. In the 21st century we have the privilege of continuing their work as contemporary followers of Jesus.

A friend, whose vocation it is to bring the good news to Muslim people abroad, reminded me in a note, that the most important feast for Muslims, Ramadan, begins April 24, next Thursday, and continues till May 23. During this time, Muslims will fast, read through the entire Koran, and strive to grow closer to God. Our friend invited John and me to join her and other Jesus followers from around the

world in making a point of learning more about our Muslim neighbors and in praying that Jesus will reveal himself to many of them during this time of their spiritual searching. In addition to being reflectors of God's love and justice to our neighbors in

Sioux Center, we can let our light shine by praying for missionaries to the Muslim world like our friend, and by joining her and many others in prayer that the millions of adherents to Islam—almost 25 percent of the world's population according to Wikipedia—will come to know the truth about God's redeeming love.

So I'm extending my friend's invitation to all of you. While many of us are home-bound during these days of the pandemic, we can still be part of the sent community and travel to the far reaches of the world through our prayers. The prayer effort I am inviting us to join is called, 30 Days Muslim World Prayer Guide. You can learn more online at [www.30DaysPrayer.com](http://www.30DaysPrayer.com).

Whatever our circumstances during these days of isolation and uncertainty, may God fill and surround us with his Holy Spirit so that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self control may shape our lives as his sent people.



-Sanneke Kok

# Shelter in Place

Over the last days and weeks, many of us have sheltered in place. Since childhood, sheltering in place had been a goal of mine—the dream of an introvert who loved the outdoors. When I began my college education at Dordt, my intended life-long occupation was to serve as a wildlife management officer or forest ranger in the far reaches of the Northwest in either Canada or Alaska. It would be in a place where I could live by myself in a rustic cabin and live off the land. My life's purpose would have been to shelter in place.

Real life presented me with pretty much the opposite of sheltering in place. I am a teacher and a father of six sons. Life required me to interact with people 24-7. Although I loved teaching and parenting, my ideal vacation would have been an alone trip to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area where I would have paddled my canoe to a remote campsite, fished for my supper, cooked over a campfire, and just enjoyed being outdoors and alone. My ideal vacation would have been to shelter in place.

My wife, Gloria, had similar hopes and dreams. We had discussed many times how wonderful life in the mountains and forests might be. We took our family to watch every “Wilderness Family” movie that came out, and we would visit with each other and with our kids about how great it would be to pack up our things, buy a few acres in the woods, build our own cabin, hunt/fish/garden for our meals, and to enjoy the outdoors. Gloria was a nurse and I was a teacher. I could home-school our children, and she could deal with any injuries and illnesses our family of boys might experience. Our dream life would have been to shelter in place.

Six years ago, I retired from Dordt University. Gloria and I had plans to enjoy our retirement. We would travel to visit National Parks. We would camp in remote locations. We would build a cabin by a solitary lake—a lake that had not yet been developed for tourists—in northern Minnesota or Wisconsin. We would spend our summers fishing, swimming, and relaxing by the lake shore. We would enjoy being away from civilization. Our ideal retirement would have been to shelter in place.

Five years ago, Gloria died from cancer; and, I was left at home alone. My life's purpose, my ideal vacation, my dream life, and my ideal retirement had died too. Or had they? My home was on an acreage on the outskirts of town. I had built a woodworking shop. There were lots of National Parks waiting to be explored. I realized that I still had opportunities to live, to recreate, as I/we had always dreamed. Although my life had changed

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## Grandma Alert! Grandpa Alert!

The Schaaps are thankful for a brand new granddaughter, Charlotte Kay, born April 7th, weighing in at 8lbs. 10 ounces. We are thrilled and greatly thankful. She determined to be born during the height of the pandemic in a Tulsa hospital. Charlotte, Mom (Kristina), Dad (David Schaap), and big (two-years-old) sister Livvie (Olivia) are all doing just fine. Google Duo is a blessing. Grandpa and Grandma Schaap are going to wait a bit to take an Oklahoma trip.

Dallas and Carol Apol are happy to announce the birth of Ryler Jack on April 11 in Lynden, WA. He's grandchild #16!

# May Birthdays & Anniversaries

2	Julian Addink	15	Will Breems	26	Lewis Clark
3	Luanne Goslinga	17	Meghan Vos	28	David Henreckson Erik & Barb Hoekstra
4	Ale Castelan	18	John-Patrick McCarthy	29	Sam Janssen
8	Eldon & Marcia Westra		Ethan & Donna Brue		Steve & Pat Crull
9	Lisa Christians Len Rhoda	19	Mark & Barb Tazelaar	30	Emily Eppinga
		20	Zoey Eggebeen	31	Joan McCarthy
11	John & Becky Stevenson	22	Everett Fedders Rowan Haan Jean Maletoungou Bernie & Kathy DeWit		
12	Rob & Megan Haan				
14	Lisa Feikema Carol Oostra Daniel Tazelaar Tom Tazelaar	23	Kurt Vos		
		25	Mark & Lisa Christians		



## Offering Schedule

<b>May 3</b>	
<b>AM</b>	General Fund
<b>May 10</b>	
<b>AM</b>	Christian Education Fund
<b>May 17</b>	
<b>AM</b>	Missions Fund
<b>May 24</b>	
<b>AM</b>	World Renew: COVID-19 Response
<b>May 31</b>	
<b>AM</b>	Building 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:*

<b>April 26:</b>	Jeremiah 11-12
<b>May 3:</b>	Jeremiah 15
<b>May 10:</b>	Jeremiah 18-20
<b>May 17:</b>	Jeremiah 27-28
<b>May 24:</b>	Jeremiah 29
<b>May 31:</b>	Jeremiah 31-32

# May 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 May. 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

## Sunday Scheduling for April

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



## Greeters

AM Jenni B, Robin F, Kurt V



## Ushers

AM Chris G, Joan MC, Shaun S

## 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, **May 25** for the June 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	(1/1/20-4/19/20) \$83,506	\$78,390	-\$5,116
Missions	(1/1/20-4/19/20) \$7,280	\$6,159	-\$1,121
Christian Education	(8/1/19-4/19/20) \$142,263	\$140,688	-\$1,575

# Notes from the Deacons

Dear Covenant Family,

In the midst of all that has been happening in the world, we are thankful that we have the assurance that God is in control of all things. We have all been affected by the social-distancing requirements brought about by COVID-19, and we realize that some of the changes we are experiencing have been more difficult for some than others.

Along with many of you, we as deacons had concerns about how we were going to pay our bills. If we were not allowed to gather together and take offerings, how would we get the funds that we needed? But, again, we worried unnecessarily. God was in control, even of this. You, our faithful givers, stepped up and quickly adjusted to the necessary changes and found ways to continue giving. Your gifts truly are a blessing to those who depend on them. Thank you!

We also want to thank those who allowed their name to stand as a nominee for deacon.

We will be drawing four names this year. The first three will replace the deacons who have completed their term in June. Those three include Megan Haan, Carol Oostra, and me. The fourth person drawn will complete the final year of Marv Wielard's term. Marv has asked to retire a year early for personal reasons.

One last note. You will see an announcement about the Spring Offering of Thanks, which was scheduled for May 3. It explains the opportunity to give to causes other than our regular offerings. Since we will not be distributing envelopes, you will notice we are asking you to give directly to the organization(s) of your choice this year.

We miss gathering together in worship with you. Acts 2 talks about the importance of the fellowship of believers. Hebrews 10 talks about the importance of meeting together so that we can encourage one another and spur each other on toward love and good deeds. We urge you to stay safe and healthy until we can meet together again.

-For the Deacons, Pat Crull

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## Serving at Covenant

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

During this time of social distancing, many of the usual volunteer opportunities are not available. However, there are ways that all of us can use our time and talents to encourage and strengthen others. This is a perfect time to reach out to a neighbor that you don't know so well, or write a note or send a card to someone who is alone or in a nursing home. Or you could send encouraging words to our

missionaries and tell them about your life.

These are things that children could be involved in also. Who wouldn't like a drawing done by child? Or a video of some project they have worked on or songs they enjoy singing. Examples of encouragement and cheer are all around town and they make me smile. On the following pages are a few pictures of encouragement from Covenant kids.

Praise the Lord for all the things we can do and ways we can connect with others to show God's love!

-Carol Oostra

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to is online schooling. The first few weeks were fine, but now as the repetition sets in, the tasks just keep getting more and more mundane. But there is a light at the end of the tunnel—a few days ago it was announced that May 8 will be the last day of school for Western. But this is bittersweet for some. Many my age are worrying about the end of the year activities that typically come with the end of the school year, the two most people are worried about is prom and graduation. I personally have never been one for formal gatherings, so the absence of these things doesn't really bother me that much. However, among my peers, I know that if these events aren't able to happen, even at a later date, many would be extremely disappointed.

### **Jasper Fedders:**

Well for me, this ending to my senior year is actually really good. I get to work. I am able to be essential at a tire shop and do what I can to help my community. I don't really spend much time on homework but that's because I don't have much homework to do. This life, while it is crazy and unpredictable, is something that we have to go through to get to the good stuff, the precious moments which there will be ahead. Yes, I may not have a true Prom, or a senior class trip. I might not even have a proper graduation. But



who cares? It's about the experience and not the reward, right? Life is about the journey and not the end. Even though our ending brings about the light of our new lives with Christ. In all of this I have to say that my year hasn't changed. I'm still going out and living like there is no tomorrow because at this time, is there one? Either way, God is good all the time and all the time God is good.

### **Joya Breems:**

As a senior, there were a lot of lasts that I was dreading, but also looking forward to. I had big plans for State Speech, Solo Ensemble, Prom, the final music concert and then graduation night. Turns out God's plans were different than mine. Although we still have online classes to finish, the reality is that my time as a student within Unity's halls is over. All of the things I was looking forward to doing for the last time, will either not happen or happen in a very different way than I had planned. However, I trust that God has a plan and this is a part of it. Before the coronavirus happened, I was stressed. I was trying to make all of my lasts happen perfectly, trying to wrap up the academic year on a positive note, while also keeping up with friendships and my job. I needed a break. As much as I didn't want to admit it, I needed some peace and quiet. God provided that peace even though it wasn't in the way I expected. Although I'm disappointed about not being able to go back to school, I've been trying to use my time at home productively. I've had more time for devotions and prayer, as well as time to work on projects that have been sitting on the back burner for a while. I've been able to spend a lot of quality time with my family, which is something that fell behind during the busyness of the school year. God has offered us peace during the pandemic and I pray that we will take that peace with us as life begins to start up again.



## Shelter in Place

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drastically, I could now do as I had always dreamed and shelter in place.

As sheltering in place had never worked out for me during my career, it did not work out for me in my retirement aloneness either. I had always had an urge to keep busy, to do things. Every winter I was busy working on projects in my workshop and completing jigsaw puzzles. Every spring, I was busy with gardening and lawn work. Every summer, I was busy with golfing and grilling. Every fall, I was busy visiting National Parks and harvesting my garden. Year around I keep busy with various social gatherings—attending church services, participating in school board meetings, visiting with my sons and their families, singing with various choruses, eating out with our senior singles group, as well as many other social interactions. It was clear to me that I would not or could not shelter in place.

Then the Corona Virus hit. Although our Governor has not yet given orders to stay home, I, along with many others, have decided to stay home as much as possible. I have not

been away from my home for several days. I now have nothing to do



except the things that I make up for myself to do. Yesterday (Saturday) morning I planned to work in my shop. The air was frosty, it had rained lightly overnight and everything was covered with ice. When I stepped outside, the sun was out, and the warmth felt comforting. My backyard was carpeted with black birds pecking at the ice on the grass, and the scene grabbed my attention. I heard a soft clattering and turned to see ice falling from the branches of a maple tree. The sun's warmth was waking the world to a new day. I walked around slowly for a while just watching, listening, and feeling. I decided that I had nothing better to do than to watch, listen, and feel God's amazing creation waking up. I felt thankful that circumstances had finally required me to shelter in place.

-Dennis Vander Plaats

