

# UPCOMING EVENTS

**09** COVENANT BLOCK PARTY  
SEPT  
Join us in the Covenant parking lot and lawn for food, games, and fun as we get to know our neighborhood.  
FROM 6 PM - 8 PM

**12** FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL  
SEPT  
Sunday School, Catechism, and Covenant Sunday Morning begin.  
FROM 9 AM - 9:45 AM

**12** SUNDAY SCHOOL PICNIC  
SEPT  
Join us in the Children's Park Shelter House for an all-church picnic.  
FROM 12 PM - 2 PM

**18** PORK 'N BANDS  
SEPT  
Head over to The Fruited Plain Cafe parking lot for food and music. Fundraiser for the Christian Ed. Fund.  
FROM 5 PM - 11PM

**1-2** CHURCH RETREAT  
OCT  
Head out to Oak Grove on Friday evening and Saturday for worship, fellowship, and fun with your Covenant family. Camp overnight or stay at home.

FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT EACH OF THESE EVENTS AND MORE IN THIS MONTH'S COURIER.

*Courier*

*September 2021*

**COVENANT**  
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

## Notes from the Deacons



The SAM Committee is hosting a block party in our church lot and lawn on Thursday, September 9, 6-8 PM.

Covenant members and our neighbors around church are invited! We'll probably go a few blocks in either direction, so if you know anyone close, feel free to invite them.

We'll have hot dogs, chips, and maybe cookies for all. Eric is bringing his juggling stuff and is always down for free lessons. We'll also rent lawn games from the library. Feel free to come and go throughout the event.

The thought is to create some space to connect with our community that's unique to our church building. Nothing too formal or structured, but a way to build relationships with our physical neighbors.

It should be lots of fun and could be a back to school/end of summer celebration.

Beyond this event, we've got some opportunities to work with your pastoral group to connect with our missionaries and our local community mission partners. If you're interested or have any volunteer needs or stories to share, please reach out to me or any of our Service and Missions committee members

Thanks for your support and we hope to see you there!

*-Eric Rowe and the SAM Committee*

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## Fellowship

Early in Acts, Luke describes the Church in its ideal early time. Luke writes, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. In this brief reflection, I'll offer a few thoughts on "fellowship," a mild translation of the strong Greek word, "koinonia."

When disciples of Jesus meet for fellowship, we work together for the cause of Christ on earth. Last spring, one of the strongest expressions of fellowship that I ever experienced came in our Colossian Forum fellowship. For ten Thursday evenings in a row, eleven of us met to learn Christlike ways to practice dialogue and discernment regarding human sexuality. We would pray together at

the beginning and end of each gathering, and also in the middle. We would listen to one another's stories; we would exchange ideas in all kinds of ways. By the end of the ten sessions, I felt grateful for and close to everyone in that fellowship. I also felt Christ had worked in the fellowship to form and equip me for his cause on earth.

In September, Erin Eggebeen and I will co-host a second Colossian Forum fellowship. This time, we will learn to dialogue and discern regarding politics in Christlike ways. We will seek to form a group that has a range of members from different age groups and different political convictions. If this fellowship interests you (and if you can devote ten Thursdays evenings to it), please let Erin or me know. We cannot guarantee participation

*(Continued on page 3)*

# Covenant Retreat Plans



Covenant CRC's Fall Retreat will be in Oak Grove Park, about 16 miles west of Sioux Center, on October 1 and 2. Most activities will take place in the Oak Grove Lodge, which is very near the entrance to the park. Feel free to come for all or part of the weekend. We hope you'll join us for this time to connect with each other and God's creation.

## Friday, October 1

- 7:00 pm Active Games for All Ages
- 8:00 pm Snacks (please bring something to share)
- 8:15 pm Bingo for All Ages
- 9:00 pm Campfire with S'mores (bring a camping chair)
- 10:00 pm Stargazing

## Saturday, October 2

- 7:30 am Hour of Prayer
- 8:30 am Hot Breakfast and Coffee (provided)
- 9:15 am Time of Worship
- 10:00 am Breakout Sessions for All Ages  
(leaf rubbing, nature walk, etc.)
- 11:30 am Bring-Your-Own Sack Lunch

If you have any questions, please contact Laura Janssen: [laurajanssen2@gmail.com](mailto:laurajanssen2@gmail.com).



Are you interested in tenting on Friday night? Oak Grove is working with us a to set aside campsites for us, but would like to know how many to expect. If you'd like to sign up or want more information, contact Laura Janssen: [laurajanssen2@gmail.com](mailto:laurajanssen2@gmail.com).

*-Laura Janssen*

## Fellowship

*(Continued from page 2)*

to everyone in this particular Colossian Forum; we will form multiple groups in months and years to come.

As I prepare to offer two sessions we are calling "Covenant Orientation," the practice of fellowship is taking a central place in my thoughts and prayers. At 9 AM on August 29 and September 5, I will convene these orien-

tation sessions in the Youth Room in the church's lower level. Our goal will be to discern how we can flourish as members of the body of Christ at Covenant. One practice that we can explore together is fellowship. Please consider attending either if you are new to Covenant or if you have been a member for a while and would still welcome some encouragement for fellowship and flourishing.

*-Pastor Joel*

# September Birthdays & Anniversaries

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



## Offering Schedule

**September 5**

AM General/Building Fund

**September 12**

AM Christian Education Fund

**September 19**

AM Missions Fund

**September 26**

AM World Renew



**First Day of Sunday School, Catechism,  
& Covenant Sunday Morning**  
Sunday, September 12, 9:00 AM



**Sunday, September 12**

12:00 PM

Children's Park Shelter House

### What to bring:

- Table service (some will be available for Dordt students and other guests)
- Families—a hot and cold dish to share
- Individuals—one dish to share
- Dessert and drinks will be provided

# September Scheduling



## Coffee Servers

Terry F, Mark H, Merrill MC, Jo A



## Nursery

### September 5

AM Paul & Ruth C, Tom & Ruth C

### September 12

AM Jake & Trena VW, Kurt & Sharon V

### September 19

AM Dennis & Pam DJ, Erik & Barb H

### September 26

AM Nick & Jenni B, Lee R

### October 3

AM Ryan & Angela H, Chris & Rin G



## Greeters

Mary D, Jo F, Shaun S



## Ushers

Pat C, Shirley T, Eldon Westra

## Substitutes

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

Steve C, Doug DB, Sharon D,  
Ron O, Stan VB, John Z

*Are you interested in serving in any of these ministries, but aren't currently on the schedule? Contact Sara in the church office—we'd love to add you in! ([covenant@mtcnet.net](mailto:covenant@mtcnet.net))*

## 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 20** for the October issue.

## Formation Sunday Evenings

Join us for our 6:00 PM gatherings this month!

September 5: Vespers

September 12: Vespers

September 19: Vespers

September 26: CRC Abuse Awareness Sunday: Tara Boer (Classis lakota's Safe Church Coordinator) will present on abuse and healing

# Update from Pastor Gianni

Our SAM Committee received this email from Pastor Gianni with his encouragement to pass it on to the congregation:

Good morning. Thank you for your email to know about our ministry and our well-being here in Miami. We are all facing very difficult days since this pandemic appeared. We are doing well despite the fact that last year Georgina, Esteban, and I had COVID. Thank God we went through mild symptoms. We are already vaccinated and we are all fine.

Regarding our ministry, we have gone through many changes. Since March 2020 we suspended our face-to-face activities and went to a virtual format.

We have already returned three months ago to face-to-face meetings with a limited group of 30 people maximum. Three families moved from Miami and the core group has remained. Since last October in 2020, officially Resonate and Classis Southeast of the CRC support us as an emerging church. We just received limited financial resources from Resonate Global Mis-

sion. We are still praying and reaching out for external support. We praise the Lord for His providence and faithfulness.

## Prayer Requests

- Please pray for my mom in California. She had a severe stroke two months ago.
- Pray for our city—we are facing a lot of COVID cases. This situation is the reason we are still on hold to come back to do our small groups and other activities.
- Pray for financial support and the new families contacted recently.

Once again thank you for your spiritual and financial support. We believe God has a great plans for Miami and you are part of this missionary calling. We also will still pray for you, our church in Sioux Center, Covenant. Please pass our greeting to the rest of our brothers in Christ.

Grace and Peace,  
-Rev. Gianni Gracia

## Giving Graph

Fund	Budgeted	Received	Difference
General	(1/1/21-8/22/21) \$181,623	\$155,639	-\$25,984
Missions	(1/1/21-8/22/21) \$15,470	\$14,757	-\$262
Christian Education*	(8/1/21-8/22/21) \$12,413	\$11,873	-\$540

\*The Christian Education Fund commitment for the year has not been finalized, but this is our best estimate at this time.

# *Serving at Covenant*

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

Hello Covenant Family! Last school year I did some volunteering for the Family Crisis Center, which provides emergency shelter and other services to victims of domestic violence. I am also a member of Covenant's Service and Missions Committee, where we have been discussing how to be intentional about local missions as well as overseas missions. One way of doing that is through offering information for local missions and their volunteering opportunities. Because I have been working with the Family Crisis Center, I thought I'd share what opportunities the FCC has for people of all ages.

The Family Crisis Center is always in need of volunteers! During the school year I volunteered with the FCC by sorting donations and cutting and folding pamphlets. There are frequently ongoing tasks like these that the FCC can always use help with if you are interested. There is also sometimes a need for last minute volunteers to help a client move or do manual labor as well. You can find out about these opportunities by being on the FCC's email list or contacting Tammy Lief at [tammyl@familycrisiscenters.org](mailto:tammyl@familycrisiscenters.org).

If you are interested in more long-term volunteering in which you interact with clients, the FCC also has volunteer dispatchers and filers who answer the crisis hotline on evenings and weekends or help file legal documents for victims. Both options require a free 20-hour online training course. I am currently completing the online course so that I can volunteer as a dispatcher in the fall. The course

has been very useful to me in understanding the legal system and the obstacles victims of domestic abuse face, as well as what choices victims are likely to face for self-preservation. This is knowledge which has spilled beyond just my ability to volunteer and has helped me love my neighbors who experience domestic violence.

*-Jaya Breems*

## *A Prayer for our Students*

*Eternal and Gracious God,  
Help me to be curious  
about the world around me.*

*Help me to be prepared  
for the challenges I face each day.*

*Help me to be open  
to difficult tasks.*

*Help me to be determined  
to complete my work.*

*Help me to be responsible in all I do.*

*Help me to be kind  
in my thoughts, words, and actions.*

*Help me to be aware of my gifts  
and to use them well.*

*Help me to be myself  
as you have created me  
and to reflect Christ to others.*

*Amen.*

# Tree Walk

Circumstances surrounding Heritage Village

may be contentious, but the place itself is a place of peace. That was our experience Sunday night as our congregation gathered to learn about trees (thanks to Ron Oostra), learn from trees (thanks to Psalm 1 and Pastor Joel), and watch a short drama of *The Giving Tree* in and around trees (thanks to Louisa De Vries, Nico De Vries, Levi Landman, Eric Rowe, Joel Kok, Steve Crull, and Rebecca De Vries). We prayed. We sang.

And then we stayed. Kids climbed trees, played with buckeyes and filberts, made leaf rubbings, played hide and seek, and munched on apples. Adults visited and strolled, commented on the bouquet possibilities of the hawthorn branches, the balance of the catalpa, the height of the cottonwood, the exotic leaf of the ginkgo. We tried to learn the names of a few trees we didn't know before and the names of those who had donated them.

Dave and I were the last to leave. As we walked past the old farm house, I said, "Reminds me of Sunday night visiting at Uncle Alfred and Aunt Mae's farm, cicada hum, rustle of cottonwood leaves, flower garden trim-



ming the house, and the late day sun winking between the maple branches." There was a calm that restored our souls.

Rest in peace, tree walk.

## Prayer

Creator God,  
we learn so much from your creation.  
Help us to be strong trees by the riverside of your abundant grace.  
Also help us to be givers more than takers of your creation and each other.  
Creator of the catalpa,  
the oak, the cottonwood, and the pine,  
of Nico and Levi and Eric and Joel and Steve,  
help us always to be care-*full*, caring for the natural world and each other.  
We see your son as the ultimate giver—the greatest sacrificer,  
with the greatest love.  
Thank you for this place.  
Accept the praise of these trees and flowers, grasses and birds,  
and accept our praise here as we join our voices with theirs.



-Jeri Schelhaas